

**Suggested Remarks
Jon D. Lindborg
USAID Mission Director
For "Global Pinoy 2005 Celebration"
Credit Union Empowerment and
Strengthening Activity
Ormoc Superdome, Ormoc City
September 4, 2005, 1:35 P.M.**

(Acknowledge distinguished
guests/participants-

Note: Listing to be provided by CUES)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Maupay na aga! ("Good morning!" in Waray,
the local dialect in Ormoc)

I am very pleased to be here this afternoon,
to join you in this year's "Global Pinoy
2005 Celebration". I have been in the
Philippines for only a month now, but I am
truly amazed at the warmth and hospitality
of Filipinos. I am honored to be in the
midst of thousands of women from the
provinces of Leyte and Samar. "Salamat han

iyo mapaso nga mapagkarawat sa amon!" (Thank you for your warm welcome!)

In particular, I would like to congratulate the awardees: the CUES partner cooperatives, and the Savings and Credit with Education (SCWE) Associations, especially its women-members, most of whom are present here today.

Your collective effort and determination contributed greatly towards our common goal of building strong institutions to deliver financial services to people in the countryside and those who, traditionally, are not able to access financial services from banks and other formal financial institutions. As a result of your strong support and cooperation, we now have Savings and Credit with Education Associations that provide quality financial services as well as valuable education support to its members.

This occasion also attests to the fact that women are a powerful force in development. Women, specially the Filipino women, have been known to be hardworking, resilient, and strong in the face of adversity. Women also give priority to the well-being of the family. These qualities make women a valuable resource in helping improve the lives of people.

The success of the CUES Savings and Credit with Education Associations is evident in the concrete examples of women at work. Given, access to credit, the necessary technical know-how, and some basic business skills, the SCWE women have put their money to good use by investing in successful microenterprise activities to supplement their family incomes. In some cases, these microenterprise activities have become the main source of income of the family as I'm sure many of you have experienced.

Women are also known to be responsible borrowers. Experiences worldwide show that women regularly pay their obligations, and use their earnings for the direct benefit of their families. For this reason, many microfinance credit programs have successfully worked with women in uplifting the lives of people around the world.

USAID, together with our partner, the World Council of Credit Unions, appreciate these strengths in the Filipino woman. Thus, under the CUES Program, we support a program that gives women access to credit and education services to enable them to take control of their lives, and by their own efforts, uplift the lives of their families.

I understand that after 7 challenging years of implementing the program, a growing number of women have benefited and continue to be served. I am particularly pleased that the successful experience of the CUES Program in Mindanao is now being replicated

here in Samar and Leyte and benefiting many more families in this part of your country. I hope that we will be able to work with more women through the Savings and Credit with Education Associations in order to reach out and extend opportunities to as many more families as possible.

In this regard, I would like to congratulate all our partners in the CUES Program including the World Council of Credit Unions, the CUES Team, VICTO (Visayan Confederation of Credit Cooperatives), all of the officers and members of the CUES partner cooperatives, and most especially the SCWE Associations that have worked so enthusiastically to make this effort a success.

In closing, I would just like to share with you an inspiring story of a young woman and mother of four in Ormoc. Before participating in the SCWE Program, she worked long and hard in balancing household

responsibilities, caring for her children, and trying to earn additional income to supplement the modest salary that her husband earns from working as laborer in a neighbor's farm. She would wake up early in the morning to bake rice cakes and other native delicacies which she sold to students in a nearby school. Life seemed so burdened as both she and her husband barely earned enough to make ends meet.

Upon learning about the SCWE Program from a friend, this woman immediately decided to join SCWE. She took out her first loan for ₱1,200.00 which she used as additional working capital for her business. Her subsequent loans were used to buy a "tri-sikad" (manually-powered tri-cycle) which she used to carry her rice cakes and "kakanins" (local delicacies) to school.

Now, after fully paying her fifth loan of ₱5,000.00, this young mother from Ormoc has succeeded in demonstrating that, with a

small loan used wisely for business, she could improve the financial situation and ultimately, the quality of life of her family. For our lady from Ormoc, it is now easier to pay for her children's education and other needs, and still have a little left for savings. In addition, the nutrition education provided by SCWE also enabled this mother to provide better health care for her family.

You may be wondering who this wonderful woman is. You actually don't have to look far. She is the woman beside you. She is you. Congratulations to each and everyone of you. Leyte and Samar has truly become a better place because of women like you.

Thank you very much!

